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Electronic interconnect device for high speed signal and data transmission, and adapter usable therewith

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An electronic interconnect assembly has a high speed coaxial interconnect for a coaxial transmission line having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor. The coaxial interconnect has a male side and a female side, with the female side including a shield sleeve having a chamber that receives a male shield contact on the male side. The shield sleeve has a contact with a compliant portion that flexibly grips the male shield contact. A mechanical alignment facility includes a closely mating pocket and body, each attached to a respective male or female side of the interconnect. A keying arrangement having protrusion elements and aperture elements are included in the pocket and body to provide selective mating of the pocket and body. Additional data and power connectors may be included with the pocket and body. An adapter for such an electronic interconnect assembly is also described.

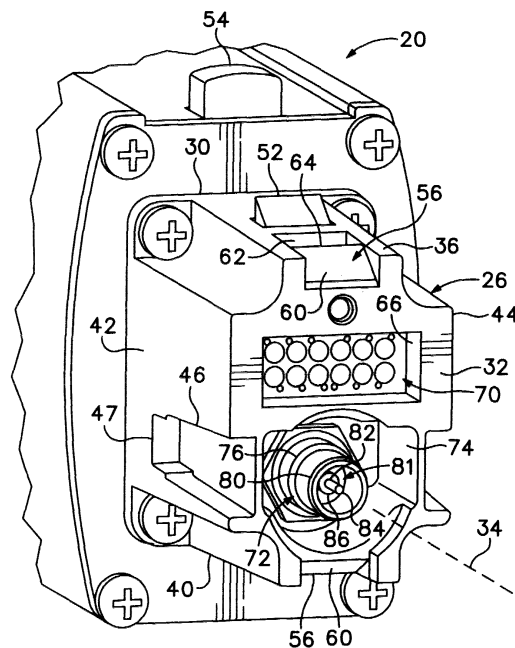


FIG.2

Description

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

[0001] This application claims the benefit of the U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/193,622, filed March 31, 2000.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The invention relates to electronic interconnects, and more particularly to interconnects for high speed signal transmission and control thereof, and an adapter for use therewith.

BACKGROUND AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Electronic test and measurement instrumentation is used to test electronic circuitry and devices. Typically, an instrument such as a digital analyzer or oscilloscope is used to test a device under test by contacting the device with an electronic or optical probe connected to the instrument via a cable. A connector on the end of the cable is plugged into a receptacle on the face of the instrument, so that high frequency signals are carried from circuitry on the probe to circuitry in the instrument.

[0004] In addition to the primary high frequency signal carried on the cable, other data signals may be carried between the probe and the instrument, such as to provide power and control signals to the probe, or to enable the instrument to actively monitor the high frequency signal only at selected times. Such systems use multiple contact connectors, with several data contacts adjacent a coaxial connector on the instrument/probe interconnect. Existing systems commonly use BNC connectors for the high frequency cable, with a connector housing on the cable supporting several pogo pins extending toward conductive lands on the instrument. To secure the cable, and to provide alignment, BNC connectors have proven effective. Some sampling oscilloscopes and other devices use SMA connectors with a separately connected bus for power and data control signals.

[0005] BNC interconnects employ rigid sleeves on each side that telescopically mate with each other to limit angular disposition of the cable connector from the chassis mounted connector. Robust mechanical support is important because probe cables may have heavy housings at the connector end to house electronic circuitry. In addition, BNC connectors have a bayonet connection system that provides rotational alignment of the connector housing, and which may be used to prevent unwanted extraction. While effective in some high frequency ranges, BNC connectors degrade signals for frequencies above about 1-3 GHz, depending on system demands and circuitry design.

[0006] Therefore, alternative high frequency tolerant connectors are used to ensure signal integrity for frequencies above this range. Threaded connectors of

some types such as the SMA standard can provide adequate high frequency performance ($\sim 12\text{-}20$ GHz), but threaded connectors are not suited to uses with extra data connections, due to the connector housing and data contacts preventing access needed to rotate the threaded connector portion. A push-on or blind mate connector such as the BMA standard provides suitable high frequency performance, and avoids the incompatibility of threaded connectors with surrounding data connector housings.

[0007] However, BMA connectors are susceptible to damage when angularly disposed with more than a moderate force and do not provide any latching or retention mechanism. The shield or ground contact on a female portion of a BMA connector consists of a cylindrical chamber having an interior side wall lined by tiny leaf springs that conform to an inserted male shield contact. This conformity and flexibility provides the high frequency performance, even with slight angular misalignment. However, the delicate leaf spring contacts can be damaged by moderate angular forces on the connector, making a BMA connector unsuitable for labs where a protruding connector may be bumped or weighed down.

[0008] The embodiments disclosed herein overcome these limitations by providing an electronic interconnect assembly with a high speed coaxial interconnect for a coaxial transmission line having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor. The coaxial interconnect has a male side and a female side, with the female side including a shield sleeve having a chamber that receives a male shield contact on the male side. The shield sleeve has a contact with a compliant portion that flexibly grips the male shield contact. A mechanical alignment facility includes a closely mating pocket and body, each attached to a respective male or female side of the interconnect. A keying arrangement having protrusion elements and aperture elements may be included in the pocket and body to provide selective mating of the pocket and body. Additional data, and possibly power, connectors may be included with the pocket and body. An adapter connecting various types of connectors to one or the other of the male or female sides of the coaxial interconnect may be constructed using one or the other of the pocket or body of the mechanical alignment facility.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0009]

Figure 1 is a perspective view of an instrument and attached probe according to a preferred embodiment of the invention.

Figure 2 is perspective view of a probe interconnect according to the embodiment of Figure 1.

Figure 3 is perspective view of a chassis interconnect according to the embodiment of Figure 1.

Figure 4 is a reverse perspective view of the probe

and chassis interconnects according to the embodiment of Figure 1.

Figure 5 is a perspective view of the probe and chassis interconnect with an alternate notch and rib configuration.

Figure 6 is an enlarged sectional view taken along the axis of the connector.

Figure 7 is an exploded view of the interconnect of Figure 1.

Figure 8 is a sectional side view of the interconnect of Figure 1 taken along a medial line.

Figures 9A-9D are perspective views of connector adapters compatible with the interconnect of Figure 3.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

[0010] Figure 1 shows an electronic instrument such as a digital oscilloscope 10 having a connected probe 12 for testing a circuit or device under test 14. The probe includes a cable 16 extending to a probe interconnect housing 20. The cable preferably includes a single coaxial wire having a central signal conductor and a surrounding ground or shield conductor. The cable further includes a multi-line bus for transmitting control signals and power between the probe and the instrument. The housing 20 is removably connected to one of several interconnect receptacles 22 on the front panel 24 of the instrument, and may contain circuitry needed to provide a connection from the cable to the instrument.

[0011] Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5 illustrate the mechanical elements implementing the electronic interconnect assembly of the present invention. As shown in Figure 2, the probe interconnect housing is terminated with an interconnect body 26 that includes electrical connectors for an effective high speed signal and data transmission, and structural alignment features for a secure and aligned mechanical connection to the instrument. The body is a moderately elongated rigid member preferably formed of a rugged material such as nickel plated zinc, die cast aluminum or the like. The body 26 has a trailing face 30 connected to the probe connect housing 20, and a parallel leading face or nose 32 facing the opposite direction, normal to a connector axis 34. The remaining upper wall 36, lower wall 40, and sidewalls 42, 44 give the body a roughly rectangular cross section that minimally varies over the length of the body between the leading and trailing faces, except for features as noted below. To facilitate manufacturing by a casting process, and to provide a tightly mating mechanical connection, the body is tapered to be slightly smaller at the nose 32.

[0012] The body 26 includes an alignment notch 46 on each sidewall 42, 44. Each notch has an elongated trapezoidal profile extending from the lead face 32 and extends parallel to the axis 34. The distal end of each notch 46 includes a shouldered guide 47 that is manufactured to close size tolerances so that it closely fits the

ends of corresponding keys as will be discussed below. The notches 46 are offset from the horizontal center line of the body 26 to prevent the insertion of the body 26 rotated 180 degrees out of position in the interconnect receptacles 22. The body 26 further includes alignment keys 50, best seen in Figure 4, on the upper and lower walls 36, 40 that is manufactured to close size tolerances so that it closely fits the ends of corresponding notches as will be discussed below. The shouldered guides 47 and the alignment keys 50 are registered with respect to the nose face 32 such that the guides and keys mate with the corresponding keys and notches at the same time.

[0013] The upper surface 36 of the body defines an aperture through which a spring loaded cam lock 52 protrudes. The cam lock is sloped from a level flush with the surface 36 at a leading edge, to a protruding trailing edge. A lock button 54 extending from the housing 20 is mechanically engaged to the lock so that pressing the button retracts the lock into the body to allow disconnection of the connector as will be discussed below.

[0014] The upper and lower surfaces 36, 40 include opposed and symmetrically positioned latch ramps 56. Each ramp has a sloped leading ramp surface 60 and a sloped trailing ramp surface 62 that rise to meet at a ridge or apex 64, which is slightly rounded. The ramps are recessed into the surfaces, so that the apex does not protrude above the surface. Each apex defines a line parallel to the surface 36, 40 in which the ramp is defined, and parallel to the nose surface 32 of the body. The ramp and apex surfaces are preferably formed with a smooth or polished surface finish to reduce wear during latching operations discussed below.

[0015] The face 32 of the body defines openings for two different electrical connectors. A first opening 66 provides access to a printed circuit board 70 mounted inside a chamber defined by the body and having a contact face accessible through the opening 66. The board 70 has an array of exposed conductive lands that are connected to circuitry in the housing 20 and/or to the probe. Some of the lands may be connected in a pattern electrically identifiable to a counterpart connector contacting the lands as will be discussed below. This option permits the instrument to identify a proper probe connector, even if the data lands are not connected to the probe or other circuitry, such as in less sophisticated but compatible probes. Alternately, the probe circuitry may have an EPROM or other non-volatile device to provide identification features.

[0016] A male side 72 of a standard BMA or blind mate connector, such as manufactured and sold by M/A-Com Division of Amp, Inc., Lowell, MA, is mounted in a recess 74 defined in the body, and extends parallel to the axis 34. The BMA male side includes a shield sleeve portion 76 having a tapered exterior portion 80 at the free end, which extends to a level slightly recessed below the face 32 to prevent damage to the connector. A central signal conductor 81 has a base portion 82, and an extending

free end portion 84 coaxial with the shield sleeve portion. The free end portion 84 has a narrower diameter than the base portion, providing a shoulder 86 facing the leading direction. The free end of the conductor 81 is recessed below the shield portion 76, to prevent damage and to ensure that the shield is connected when the signal conductor makes and breaks contact as will be discussed below.

[0017] Figure 3 shows the instrument mounted receptacle 22 which may be a rigid plastic body, die cast aluminum or the like that forms the female side of the connector, and which receives the probe connector body 26. The receptacle is a pocket or box-shaped body having an open side facing away from the instrument front panel 24, and an open side facing a floor panel 94, essentially providing a tube of rectangular cross section. The receptacle 22, shown more clearly in Figure 4, has retention nut channels 170 formed therein with each channel having a bore 172. A retention nut 174 is held in each of the channels 170 with the threaded bore of the nut aligned with the corresponding channel bore 172. The panel 94 is preferably a stamped metal sheet that is penetrated only to the extent needed to provide fastener holes and electrical connector holes, to avoid EMI leakage. Threaded bolts (not shown) are passed through the fastener holes and screw onto the retention nuts 174 to secure the receptacle 22 to the front panel 24.

[0018] The receptacle 22 has a rim 90 that protrudes from the panel 24, and has sidewalls 92 extending to the floor 94 recessed well below the rim and the panel. Each sidewall 92 has an elongated key 96 extending from the rim toward the floor 94, the ends of each key 97 precisely sized to closely receive a corresponding shouldered guide 47 in notch 46 on the probe connector body 26. The length of the notches 46 in body 26 are oversized so that the keys 96 do not bottom out in the notches 46 before the BMA connector is fully connected, as will be discussed below. In addition, the depth to which each notch 46 is recessed below the plane of the sidewall 42, 44 in which it is formed is slightly excessive, to provide adequate clearance. The receptacle 22 further includes notches 98 formed in the top and bottom of the rim 90 that mate with the keys 50 on the body 26. The widths of the shouldered guides 47, key ends 97, keys 50 and notches 98 are closely controlled so that precise positioning of the body relative to the receptacle rim is provided in both the vertical and horizontal directions even if the overall dimensions of the body and receptacle are not as narrowly constrained.

[0019] The keys and notches in the receptacle and body may be reversed as shown in Figure 5. The body 26 includes an alignment key 220 on each major face 36, 40, 42, 44 of the body. Each key has an elongated rectangular profile, and extends parallel to the axis 34. The keys are manufactured to close size tolerances so that they closely fit corresponding notches as will be discussed below. The keys are registered with each other

so that the leading ends 222 of all keys are equally spaced apart from the nose face 32. Each sidewall 92 of the receptacle 22 defines an elongated notch 224 at the rim 90, each notch precisely sized to closely receive a corresponding key 220 on the probe connector body 26. The length of each notch 224, that is, the depth to which it extends into the receptacle chamber, is oversized so that the keys 220 do not bottom out in the notches 224 before the BMA connector is fully connected, as will be discussed below. In addition, the depth to which each notch 224 is recessed below the plane of the wall in which it is formed is slightly excessive, to provide adequate clearance. Like the previously described embodiment, the widths of the notches and keys are closely controlled, so that precise positioning of the body relative to the receptacle rim is provided even if the overall dimensions of the body and receptacle are not as narrowly constrained. In other embodiments, each side may have both notches and keys, with the other having an opposite set of corresponding elements.

[0020] Thus, the notch and key arrangement permits insertion and extraction along the axis 34, but constrains lateral translation in the two degrees of freedom defined by the front panel plane 24, as well as the rotational degree of freedom about the axis. The remaining translational degree of freedom (along the axis) is constrained by the latching mechanism, and the remaining rotational degrees of freedom (lateral and horizontal bending of the probe connector body from normal to the front panel) are constrained by the connected BMA connector, as will be discussed below.

[0021] Figure 4 shows representatively positioned protrusions 176 extending from the leading face 32 of the interconnect body 26 that mate with corresponding apertures 178 formed in a downward extending tab 180 formed in the receptacle 22. The protrusions 176 and apertures 178 permit the exclusion of incompatible probe connectors from improper connection with the instrument. The protrusions in the interconnect body 26 must have the corresponding aperture positions as the receptacle 22 for insertion to be permitted. While Figure 4 show two protrusions and apertures, an array of protrusions and apertures may be formed in the interconnect body 26 and receptacle 22 to provide a family of interconnects having differing keying arrangements. The array of protrusions may be implemented with an array of apertures in the interconnect body 26 that accept elongated studs that extend past the leading face 32 of the body 26. The studs may be arranged in the array to produce a number of unique patterns. The array of apertures may be implemented in the tab 180 of the receptacle 22. Plastic inserts are inserted into apertures that do not correspond to the stud arrangement of the protrusion array. Any interconnect body 26 having a stud arrangement that does not correspond to the aperture arrangement can not be electrically connected to an incompatible receptacle 22. The many possible positions of the protrusions and apertures, and the option

of using a protrusion or aperture on either side of the connector, permits innumerable configurations to ensure that only the intended probes can be connected with a given receptacle.

[0022] An alternate configuration for the aperture array is to remove the tab 180 from the receptacle 22 and form the aperture array in the front panel 24 of the electronic instrument 10. The studs in the protrusion array extend into the apertures in the front panel 24. Plastic or metal inserts are inserted into the apertures in the front panel 24 to configure the array to the stud pattern of the protrusion array. As would be expected the studs in this configuration would be longer than those in the previously described configuration.

[0023] Returning to Figure 3, a symmetrically opposed pair of spring loaded latches 100 protrudes into the receptacle chamber through openings defined in the upper and lower walls of the receptacle, in line with a vertical medial plane. Each latch has a roof shape with sloping faces rising to radiused apex ridges, with the slopes selected to match the surfaces of the latch ramps 62 on the body 26. The slopes are established to provide a lesser insertion force and a greater extraction force by using a gentler slope on the ramp surface 60 and corresponding latch surface than on ramp surface 62 and its corresponding latch surface. The radiused apexes and tight mechanical tolerances of the body/receptacle interface ensure that the latches do not reach a stable condition near the apex with one latch on the inserted side of the apex, and the other on the extracted side. Accordingly, the latches ensure that the connector is either fully connected, or adequately extracted to avoid undesirable partial electrical contact, as will be discussed below.

[0024] There are two electrical connector components mounted to the floor 94 and within the receptacle, each component being the counterpart of a connector on the body. An array of spring loaded pogo pins 102 is positioned to register with the lands of the circuit board 70. The pins have a range of motion with suitable biasing force to accommodate the need that the BMA connector is free to establish the insertion depth of the connection. A female side 104 of the BMA connector is mounted to the floor panel 94, and is shown in greater detail in Figure 6. The connector has a cylindrical sleeve 106 defining a cylindrical chamber 107.

[0025] The sidewalls and floor of the chamber are lined with a leaf spring sleeve 110 having side springs 112 bowing slightly into the chamber, and end spring portions 114 bowing into the chamber from the floor. The side springs compliantly grip the male shield portion 76, even if it were somewhat angularly displaced. For the BMA standard, displacements of up to 5 degrees are tolerated without degradation of the connection. However, such displacement may cause damage to the delicate springs as noted above. The end spring portions provide compliant contact with the end surface 116 of the male shield, tolerating a small range of insertion

depths, so that the signal connection may establish the precise insertion depth. A central signal conductor 120 is a rigid sleeve having a bore 122 sized to closely receive the free end portion 84 of the male side conductor. Compliant spring portions (not shown) line the bore to prove effective ohmic contact.

[0026] The conductor 120 has a free end surface 124 that is recessed at adequate depth below the free end face 126 of the shield sleeve 106 to protect against damage. In addition, the sleeve extends to an adequate distance relative to the signal conductor to ensure that the shield contact is already made when the signal contact connects and is still made when the signal contact disconnects.

[0027] Inserting the body 26 into the receptacle 22 positions the keys 96 in the receptacle 22 into the notches 46 in the body 26. Continued insertion of the body 26 into the receptacle causes the male shield portion 76 to enter the female cylindrical chamber 107. The compliant side springs 112 grip the male shield portion 76 to align the free end portion 84 of the male signal conductor 81 to the bore 122 of the female central signal conductor. Continued insertion of the body 26 into the receptacle 22 engages the ends 97 of the keys 96 into the shouldered guides 47 of notches 46. Likewise, the keys 50 on the top and bottom of the body engage the notches 98 in the rim 90. The connector is fully inserted, as will be discussed below with respect to Fig. 8, when the shoulder 86 presses against the face 124 of the female signal conductor. With the shoulder 86 pressed against the face 124 of the female signal conductor, the end surface 116 of the male shield depresses the end spring portions 114 of the leaf spring sleeve 110. The spring latches provide this biasing force.

[0028] Figure 7 shows additional mechanical details, with the lock 52 and button 54 being connected to a lock frame 126, for sliding with respect to a housing end plate 130 that is mounted to housing 20, and to which body 26 is mounted. A rear end 132 of the male side of the BMA connector 72 passes through a hole in the plate, so that it extends into the housing 20 for connection to circuitry in the housing or to the cable. The rear end is illustrated with a standard SMA threaded connector, although any type may be employed, including BNC, BMA, N, or any high frequency capable connector. The latch ramp 56 is shown, illustrating the different slopes needed to provide a greater extraction force than insertion force.

[0029] The spring latches 100 are each mounted to an elongated bar 134. Each bar extends slightly more than the width of the receptacle, with one bar positioned above the upper wall, and the other below the lower wall. The bars are positionally constrained by channel walls 135 extending from the receptacle's upper and lower surfaces. A coil tension spring 136 is positioned on each side of the receptacle, with the ends of each spring connected to the extending ends of the bars to bias the bars together. With the bars thus biased, the latches are bi-

ased toward each other. In the preferred embodiment, the latches are plastic, and integral with elongated plastic beams 140 that receive the metal reinforcing bars 142. Alternately, fixed spring retention surfaces may be defined over the latches 100 with compression springs captured between the spring retention surfaces and the latches 100. A recess 141 is formed in the receptacle sidewalls behind each spring 136 that contains a high density foam insert 143, such as manufactured and sold by Rogers, Corp., East Woodstock, CT, under the trade name Poron. The inserts 143 dampen excess spring noise during the insertion and removal of the body 26 into the receptacle 22.

[0030] Figure 8 shows the connector in a fully inserted condition. An interconnect cable 144, preferably a flex circuit, is connected to the circuit board 70, which is mechanically secured to the body by a screw, staking or the like. The data and power cable are connected to circuitry (not shown) in the probe interconnect housing 20. The pogo pin connector 102 has fixed leads extending into the instrument, and to which a circuit board 146 is soldered, with an extending data cable 150 connected to circuitry in the instrument 10. Alternately, the pogo pin connectors 102 may be soldered directly to a front panel circuit board. The probe cable 16 is connected to the male side 72 of the BMA, which is shown with the shoulder fully abutting the face of the female signal conductor. An instrument signal cable 152 is connected to the rear of the female side 104, and connects to circuitry in the instrument. To bias the shoulder 84 of the male side of the BMA against the female face 124, the latches are arranged so that the latches do not bottom out against the flat surface of the body, but are pressing on the sloped ramp surface. This generates the axial biasing force needed to ensure a suitable high frequency connection.

[0031] The spring bias on the lock frame 126 is provided by a coil compression spring 154 that is captured between a portion of the lock frame and a fixed arm 156 extending axially from the plate 130. A notch 160 is engaged by the lock to prevent accidental extraction. The lock mechanism is independent from the latch mechanism. That is, the combination of the latch ramps 60 and 62 on the interconnect body 26 with the spring latches 100 on the receptacle 22 provide adequate latching force to secure the interconnect body 26 within the receptacle 22 without the need for the lock 52 and button 54. The lock mechanism is provided in the preferred embodiment as a secondary protection against accidental removal of the probe interconnect housing from the electronic instrument 10. The lock design is also unique in that it has a "fail safe" feature. If the user tries to remove the device without pushing the lock button, the lock design is such that it will "cam out" and the device will release before there is damage to the lock or retention mechanism. This is in part controlled by the ramp angle on the front face of the movable portion of the lock mechanism. Depending on the probe application, the

locking mechanism may not be used in the probe interconnect housing.

[0032] Figures 9A, 9B, and 9C show different connector adapters 200A, 200B, 200C configured to interface standard connectors to the custom connector receptacle described above in the preferred embodiment. These permit a generic probe or other circuit under test connecting device not designed for the instrument to provide a signal to the instrument. In particular, because the high frequency connector is a BMA type unsuited for a probe without other support against bending and accidental extraction, other connector types are needed. Each adapter includes a standard male body 26 with the same male BMA connector, latches and optional lock as in the preferred embodiment. The illustrated adapters may not need the additional data lines, so the board 70 need not be connected to a cable 144 as in the preferred embodiment. However, because the instrument may include fail-safe measures to ensure against operation without a connector properly installed, the board may be provided with a selected connection between two or more lands or via information stored in an EPROM or other non volatile memory contained with the adapter, thereby indicating to the instrument that a proper connector is in place.

[0033] Adapter 200A has a female SMA connector input 202, much as if the preferred embodiment had the housing 20 replaced by a more compact housing, and the cable connection to the BMA male side 72 eliminated. Adapter 200B has a female BNC connector input 204, and could also include power and data interfaces for backward compatibility to support existing single or multi-line connector configurations, such as employed in the P6139A and P6245 measurement probes manufactured and sold by Tektronix, Inc. Beaverton, Oregon. Adapter 200C has a female N connector input 206. To provide a more robust connection to the instrument when a heavy cable is to be connected, such as to an N connector, a pair of optional thumbscrews 210 are provided to mate with tapped holes or PEM® nuts in the instrument front panel. In the preferred embodiment, the male BMA connector is a custom screw machine part having sufficient length to position the various connectors at the housing surface. Alternately, a standard BMA connector with an SMA connector end may be used with the various adapter connectors, such as SMA to BNC connectors, SMA to N connectors, and the like.

[0034] To avoid excessive torque that may damage the front panel, the thumbscrews 210 have camming surfaces that prevents use of a screwdriver for insertion. These screws permit the use of a tool for extraction, such as may be needed if the fastener becomes frozen, or if a user with limited dexterity or strength needs to extract the screws. Such screws are different from those normally employed to prevent vandalism and dismantling of public structures such as rest room stalls, in that they operate in reverse, facilitating tool-aided extraction, but preventing tool-aided securement.

[0035] In Figure 9D, an adapter 200D provides for conversion of a probe designed for the preferred embodiment for use with an instrument with a generic input such as BNC, SMA, or N. The adapter uses the female side of the preferred embodiment, but without being chassis mounted. A conventional male connector 212 extends from the rear of the connector. Alternatively, a female connector may be provided, so that a male cable end may connect between the adapter and an instrument input. Although shown with springs and latch bars exposed for clarity, in the preferred embodiment a shroud would surround these components to prevent damage and to provide a sleek appearance.

[0036] While the disclosure is made in terms of a preferred embodiment, the invention is not intended to be so limited. For instance, the electrical connectors may be positioned on different sides of the connector. Having the pogo connector on the instrument side reduces the risk of damage that might occur if it were mounted on the probe side, due to the possibility of probes being subject to damage by dropping or contact with other hardware in a drawer. However, the pogo connector may be on the probe side if there is a concern that the pogo connector may require service or replacement, which is more practical with a probe than with an instrument. Similarly, the male and female sides of the BMA may be reversed, should usage needs dictate. The pogo and BMA connectors may be mounted in either configuration, independent of each other.

[0037] While the invention is illustrated with a fixed female BMA connector, it is possible to use a floating or spring loaded connector component for embodiments having a single or multiple BMA connections on a single probe connector housing, to accommodate positional variations between connectors on the housing. However, this would require a flexible cable loop to each floating BMA in the instrument housing, complicating internal wiring of the instrument, and potentially causing motion-induced fatigue or damage where the instrument cable connects to other circuitry. Accordingly, it is preferable for single BMA connectors to use a fixed connector on the instrument.

[0038] The key and notch alignment facility is intended to provide accurate alignment with a wobble of less than 0.5 degree being tolerated. This is adequate to provide nominal signal performance with a BMA connector, and to guard against damage by excessive displacement. While it is possible to achieve tighter tolerances, there is an advantage to allowing some minimal wobble, as it provides needed "scrubbing" of the pogo pins against the lands upon connection, providing a low resistance contact, and removing or wearing through any debris or high resistance layer on the lands. The key and notch facility may be totally eliminated with moderate and tolerable increases in wobble, about 1-2 degrees. While a more precise alignment is desirable for a quality feel, and for a uniform appearance when multiple connectors installed in an instrument, there is se-

curity in having adequate alignment even if a key or notch were damaged or missing.

[0039] The illustrations of the preferred embodiment are made with respect to BMA connectors, although some principles of the invention are applicable with any connector type. Other principles of the invention are applicable with any coaxial high speed connector lacking a screw down attachment, or having a compliant contact sleeve, or having insertion-depth-sensitive conductors such as a shoulder contact, or any connector not intended to provide support against lateral bending loads.

Claims

1. An electronic interconnect assembly comprising:
 - a high speed coaxial interconnect for a coaxial transmission line having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor, the coaxial interconnect having a male side and a female side;
 - the female side including a shield sleeve defining a chamber for receiving a male shield contact on the male side;
 - the shield sleeve including a contact facility having a compliant portion operable to flexibly grip the male shield contact;
 - a mechanical alignment facility including a closely mating pocket and body; and
 - one of the pocket and body attached to the male side, the other of the pocket and body attached to the female side.
2. The apparatus of claim 1 further comprising:
 - a keying arrangement having at least a first protrusion element and at least a first aperture element capable of receiving the protrusion element; and
 - one of the protrusion element and aperture element attached to the pocket, the other of the protrusion element and aperture element attached to the body and aligned with the other element.
3. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the pocket has a rim and a floor recessed below the rim, and wherein one side of the interconnect is connected to the floor, such that the rim limits angular displacement of the body.
4. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the interconnect is a blind mating interconnect.
5. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the assembly includes only a single high speed interconnect.

6. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the male shield contact has a tapered exterior end portion.
7. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 including an electronic instrument to which one of the pocket and body is mounted, and wherein an associated side of the interconnect is electrically connected to circuitry in the instrument.
8. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the female side of the interconnect is connected to the instrument.
9. The apparatus of claim 7 wherein the associated side of the interconnect is rigidly fixed to the instrument, such that application of a force to the interconnect side does not flex an electrical line connected to instrument circuitry.
10. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein one of the pocket and body defines a notch and the other of the pocket and body includes a key closely mating with the notch.
11. The apparatus of claim 10 wherein the pocket has a rim, and a floor recessed below the rim, and wherein one side of the interconnect is connected to the floor, and wherein at least one of the key and the notch is positioned at the rim.
12. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 including an electronic probe to which an associated side of the interconnect is electrically connected.
13. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the male side of the interconnect includes a male signal portion having an elongated free end extending away from a shoulder portion, and wherein the female side includes a female signal portion having a free end face and defining a bore, and wherein the connection is fully made when the free end of the male portion is received in the bore, and the shoulder portion abuts the free end face.
14. The apparatus of claim 13 including a spring latch facility operable to bias the shoulder portion against the free end face.
15. The apparatus of claim 13 wherein the shield sleeve of the female side includes a conductive stop portion operable to contact an end face of the male shield contact when the connection is fully made.
16. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 including a signal connector having a first and second signal portion on respective sides of the interconnect, and wherein at least one of the first and second portions extends to a limited distance with respect to at least one of the shield sleeve and the male shield contact such that the shield is connected before the signal upon making a connection.
17. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 including a separate electronic data interconnect having a first side connected to the pocket and a second side connected to the body.
18. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein at least one side of the data interconnect includes compliant contacts operable to contact a corresponding set of contacts on the other side, over a range of depths with which the body is inserted into the pocket, such that an insertion depth established by the coaxial interconnect may be accommodated.
19. The apparatus of claim 17 where one side of the data interconnect includes pogo pins, and wherein the other side includes a fixed contact surface.
20. The apparatus of claim 17 wherein the compliant contact are contained within the pocket.
21. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the body includes a free end surface, and wherein the coaxial interconnect side connected to the body is recessed below the end surface.
22. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the pocket has a rim and a floor recessed below the rim, and wherein the aperture element is formed in a tab extending downward within the pocket.
23. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the pocket has a rim and a floor recessed below the rim, and wherein the aperture element is formed in the floor of the pocket.
24. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the aperture element includes an array of aperture elements.
25. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the body has a free end face and the protrusion element is a stud extending outward from the free end face.
26. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the body has a free end face and the protrusion element includes an array of protrusion elements and wherein the protrusion elements are studs extending outward from the free end face.
27. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2 wherein the pocket has a rim and a floor recessed below the rim and wherein the aperture element includes an array of aperture elements disposed within the pocket, and wherein the body has a free end face and the protrusion element includes an array of protrusion elements wherein the protrusion elements are studs

extending outward from the free end face and the protrusion elements have a correspondence with the aperture elements.

- 28.** An electronic interconnect assembly portion comprising: 5

a high speed coaxial interconnect portion for a coaxial transmission line having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor, the coaxial interconnect having a shield sleeve defining a chamber for receiving a shield contact; 10

the shield sleeve including a contact facility having a compliant portion operable to flexibly grip the shield contact; 15

a mechanical alignment facility portion selected from a pair of alignment facility portions comprising a pocket and a closely mating body, and the interconnect portion connected to the selected alignment facility portion. 20

- 29.** The apparatus of claim 28 wherein mechanical alignment facility portion comprises a pocket having a rim and a floor recessed below the rim, and wherein one side of the interconnect is connected to the floor, such that the rim limits angular displacement of the body. 25

- 30.** The apparatus of claim 28 wherein the interconnect portion is part of a blind mating interconnect. 30

- 31.** The apparatus of claim 28 wherein the assembly includes only a single high speed interconnect. 35

- 32.** The apparatus of claim 28 including an electronic instrument to which mechanical alignment facility portion is mounted, and wherein the interconnect portion is electrically connected to circuitry in the instrument. 40

- 33.** The apparatus of claim 28 wherein the mechanical alignment facility portion includes a feature selected from a feature group comprising a notch and a key, such that a corresponding mating feature on a mating alignment facility portion engages the feature. 45

- 34.** The apparatus of claim 28 including a separate electronic data interconnect portion connected to the mechanical alignment facility portion. 50

- 35.** The apparatus of claim 34 wherein the data interconnect portion includes movable spring biased contacts. 55

- 36.** An electronic interconnect assembly portion comprising:

a high speed coaxial interconnect portion for a coaxial transmission line having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor, the coaxial interconnect having a shield contact surrounding a signal contact; 5

the shield contact having a tapered exterior end portion receivable in a shield sleeve; 10

a mechanical alignment facility portion selected from a pair of alignment facility portions comprising a pocket and a closely mating body, and the interconnect portion connected to the selected alignment facility portion. 15

- 37.** The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the interconnect portion is part of a blind mating interconnect. 20

- 38.** The apparatus of claim 36 wherein one of the pocket and body defines a notch and the other of the pocket and body includes a key closely mating with the notch. 25

- 39.** The apparatus of claim 36 including an electronic probe to which the interconnect portion is electrically connected. 30

- 40.** The apparatus of claim 36 wherein the central signal conductor has an elongated free end extending away from a shoulder portion, such that it is suitable for connection to a female signal portion having a free end face and defining a bore, with the shoulder portion abutting the free end face. 35

- 41.** The apparatus of claim 36 including a separate electronic data interconnect having a first side connected to the pocket and a second side connected to the body. 40

- 42.** The apparatus of claim 41 wherein the data interconnect includes a printed circuit board having conductive lands facing an insertion direction. 45

- 43.** The apparatus of claim 42 wherein at least two of the conductive lands are electrically shorted to each other. 50

- 44.** An electronic interconnect assembly comprising:

a high speed coaxial interconnect for a coaxial transmission line having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor, the coaxial interconnect having a male side and a female side; 5

the male side of the interconnect including a male signal portion having an elongated free end extending away from a shoulder portion; 10

female side including a female signal portion having a free end face and defining a bore, and wherein the connection is fully made when the 15

free end of the male portion is received in the bore, and the shoulder portion abuts the free end face;

a mechanical alignment facility including a closely mating pocket and body; and
one of the pocket and body attached to the male side, the other of the pocket and body attached to the female side.

45. The apparatus of claim 44 wherein the female side includes a shield sleeve defining a chamber for receiving a male shield contact, on the male side, the shield sleeve including a conductive stop portion operable to contact an end face of a male shield contact when the connection is fully made.

46. The apparatus of claim 44 including a spring latch facility operable to bias the shoulder portion against the free end face.

47. The apparatus of claim 46 wherein the spring latch facility includes a pair of latches positioned on opposite sides of the interconnect, such that a symmetrical biasing force is provided.

48. The apparatus of claim 44 including a separate electronic data interconnect having a first side connected to the pocket and a second side connected to the body.

49. The apparatus of claim 48 wherein at least one side of the data interconnect includes compliant contacts operable to contact a corresponding set of contacts on the other side, over a range of depths with which the body is inserted into the pocket, such that an insertion depth established by the coaxial interconnect may be accommodated.

50. An adapter for an electronic interconnect assembly comprising:

a high speed coaxial interconnect having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor with the coaxial interconnect having a male side and a female side;
the female side including a shield sleeve defining a chamber for receiving a male shield contact on the male side;
the shield sleeve including a contact facility having a compliant portion operable to flexibly grip the male shield contact;
a mechanical alignment facility portion selected from a pair of alignment facility portions comprising a pocket and a closely mating body;
one of the male side and the female side of the coaxial interconnect selected for connection to the selected mechanical alignment facility portion; and

an electrical signal connector having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor connected to the selected mechanical alignment facility portion and electrically coupled to the respective central signal conductor and surrounding shield conductor of the selected side of the coaxial interconnect.

51. The apparatus of claim 50 wherein the pocket has a rim and a floor recessed below the rim, and wherein one side of the interconnect is connected to the floor.

52. The apparatus of claim 50 wherein the interconnect is a blind mating interconnect.

53. The apparatus of claim 50 wherein the assembly includes only a single high speed interconnect.

54. The apparatus of claim 50 wherein the male shield contact has a tapered exterior end portion.

55. The apparatus of claim 50 wherein one of the pocket and body defines a notch and the other of the pocket and body includes a key closely mating with the notch.

56. The apparatus of claim 55 wherein the pocket has a rim, and a floor recessed below the rim, and wherein one side of the interconnect is connected to the floor, and wherein at least one of the key and the notch is positioned at the rim.

57. The apparatus of claim 50 including a separate electronic data interconnect portion selected from a pair of electronic data interconnect portions comprising compliant contacts and fixed surface contacts.

58. The apparatus of claim 57 wherein one of the compliant contacts and fixed surface contacts are selected for the selected mechanical alignment facilities portion.

59. The apparatus of claim 58 where the compliant contacts include pogo pins.

60. The apparatus of claim 50 wherein the electrical signal connector is a BNC connector selected from a male connector and a female connector.

61. The apparatus of claim 50 wherein the electrical signal connector is a SMA connector selected from a male connector and a female connector.

62. The apparatus of claim 50 wherein the electrical signal connector is a N type connector selected from a male connector and a female connector.

- 63.** An adapter for an electronic interconnect assembly comprising:

a high speed coaxial interconnect having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor, 5
 the coaxial interconnect having a male side and a female side;
 the female side including a shield sleeve defining a chamber for receiving a male shield contact on the male side; 10
 the shield sleeve including a contact facility having a compliant portion operable to flexibly grip the male shield contact;
 a pocket mechanical alignment facility portion selected from a pair of alignment facility portions comprising the pocket and a closely mating body with the female side of the interconnect connected to the pocket mechanical alignment facility portion; and 15
 an electrical signal connector having a central signal conductor and a surrounding shield conductor connected to the pocket mechanical alignment facility portion and electrically coupled to the respective central signal conductor and surrounding shield conductor of the female side of the coaxial interconnect. 20 25

- 64.** The apparatus of claim 63 wherein mechanical alignment facility pocket portion comprises a rim, a floor recessed below the rim and sides, and wherein one side of the interconnect is connected to the floor, such that the rim limits angular displacement of the body. 30 35

- 65.** The apparatus of claim 64 wherein the mechanical alignment facility pocket portion including a latch facility having a pair of latches positioned on opposite sides of the pocket, such that a symmetrical biasing force is provided. 40

- 66.** The apparatus of claim 63 wherein the interconnect is a blind mating interconnect.

- 67.** The apparatus of claim 63 wherein the electrical signal connector is a BNC connector selected from a male connector and a female connector. 45

- 68.** The apparatus of claim 63 wherein the electrical signal connector is a SMA connector selected from a male connector and a female connector. 50

- 69.** The apparatus of claim 63 wherein the electrical signal connector is a N type connector selected from a male connector and a female connector. 55

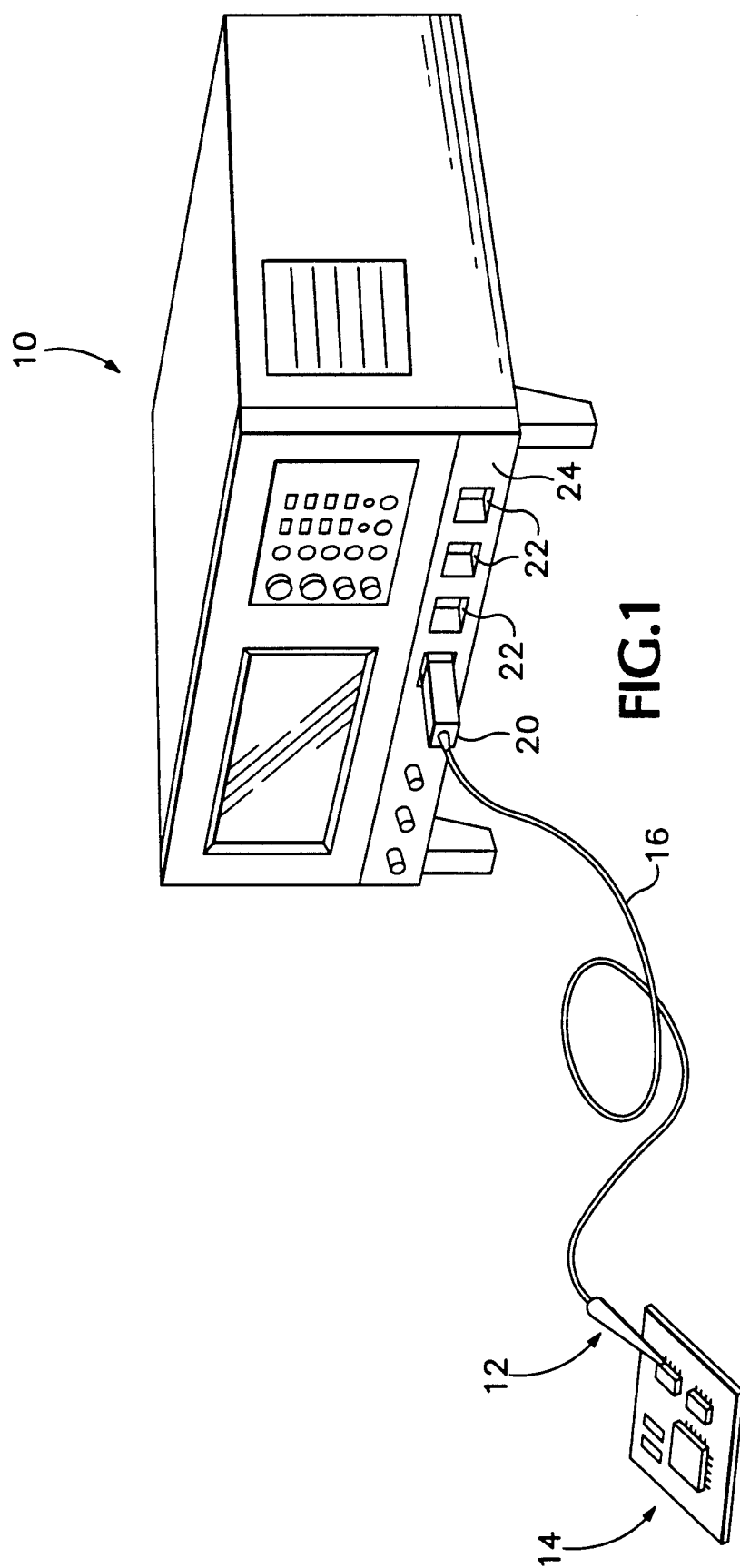
- 70.** The apparatus of claim 63 wherein the mechanical alignment facility portion includes a feature selected

from a feature group comprising a notch and a key, such that a corresponding mating feature on a mating mechanical alignment facility portion engages the feature.

- 71.** The apparatus of claim 63 including a separate electronic data interconnect portion connected to the mechanical alignment facility portion selected from a pair of electronic data interconnect portions comprising compliant contacts and fixed surface contacts.

- 72.** The apparatus of claim 71 wherein the compliant contacts include movable spring biased contacts.

- 73.** The apparatus of claim 71 wherein the movable spring biased contacts are pogo pins.



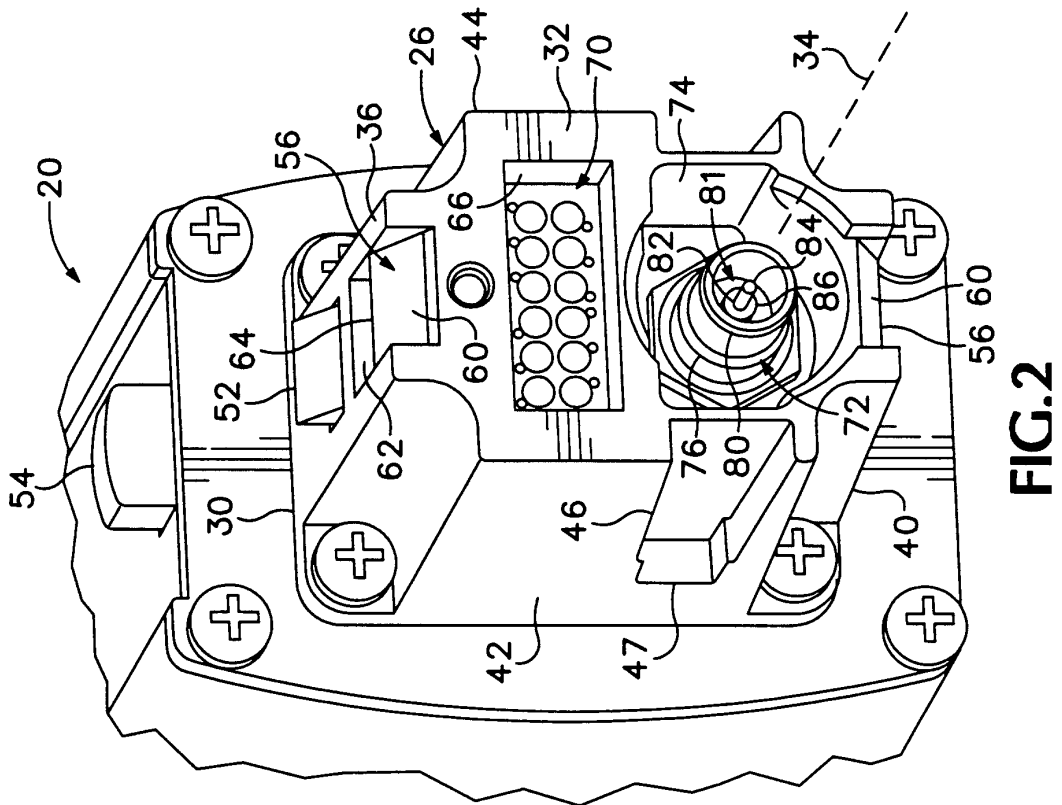


FIG. 2

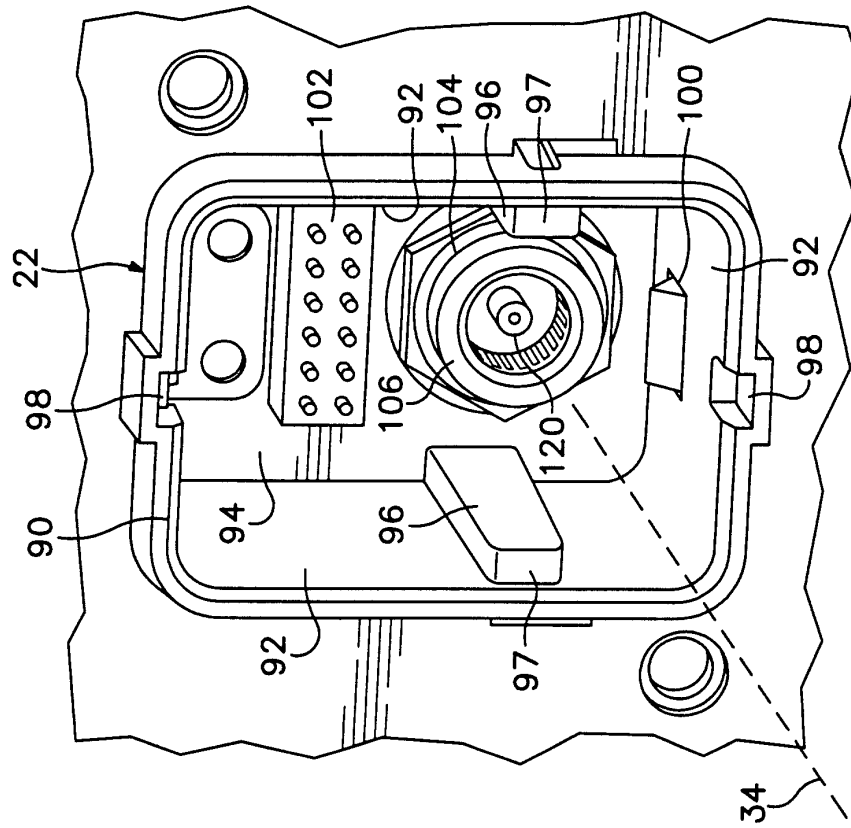
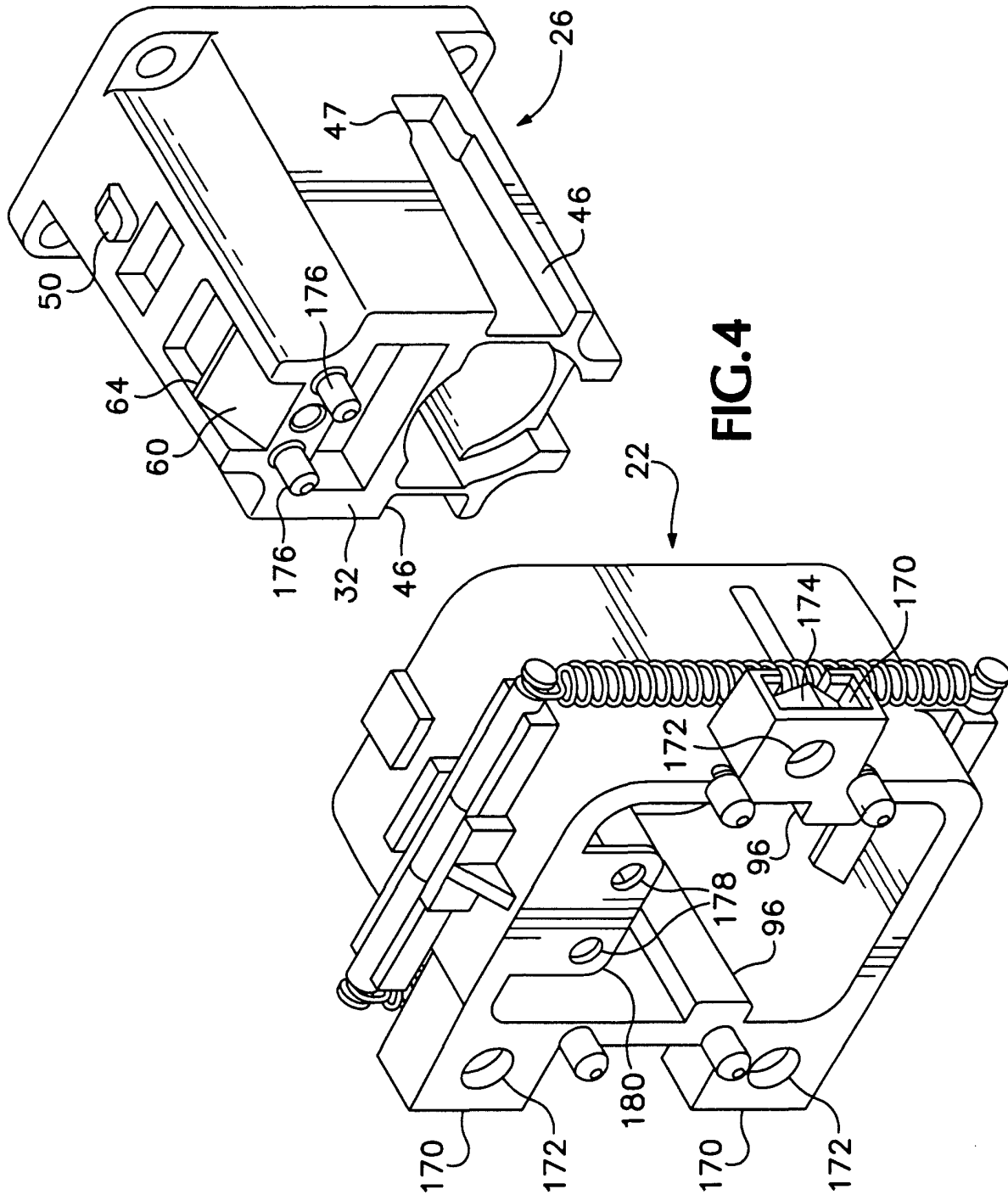


FIG. 3



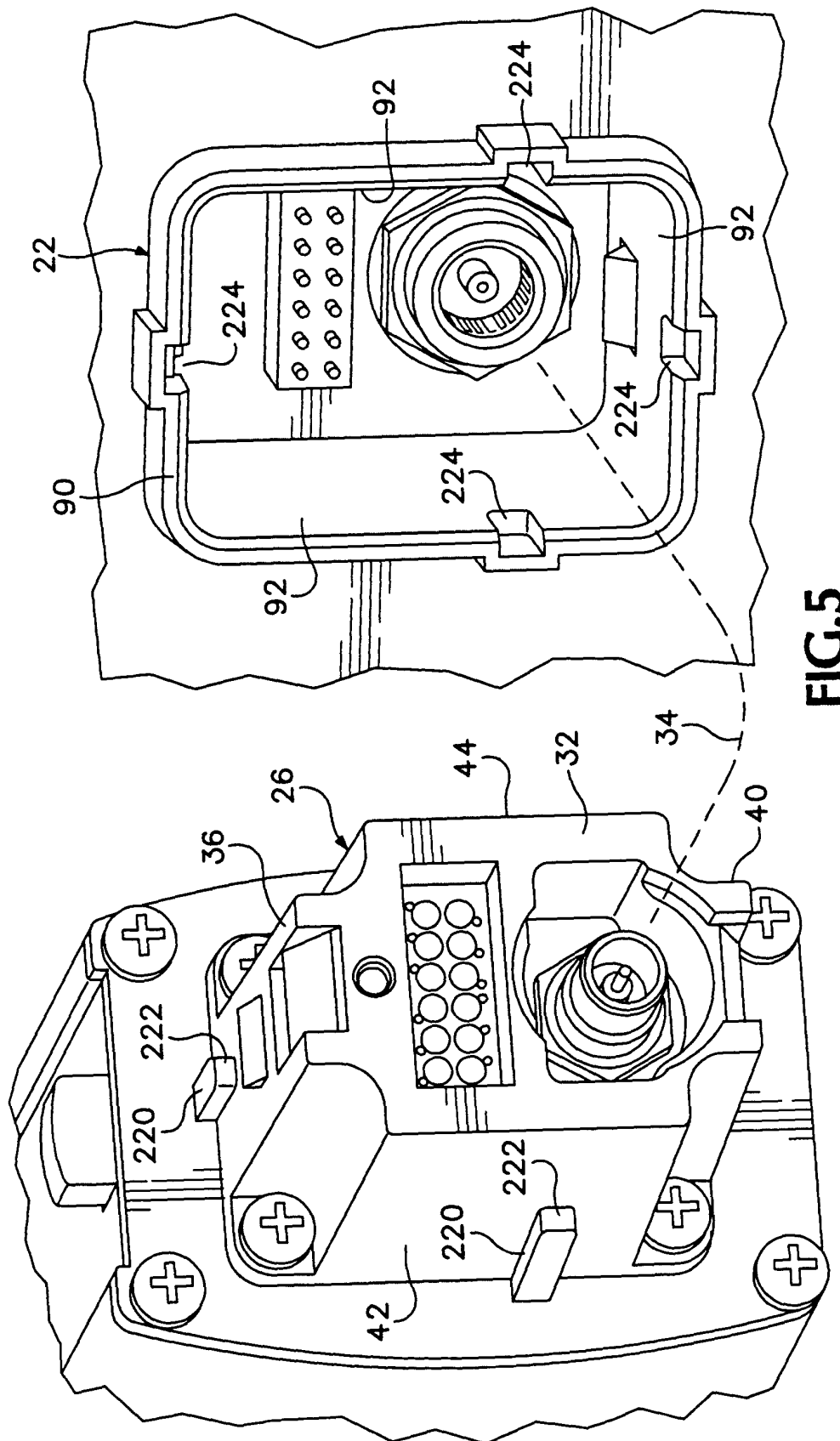


FIG. 5

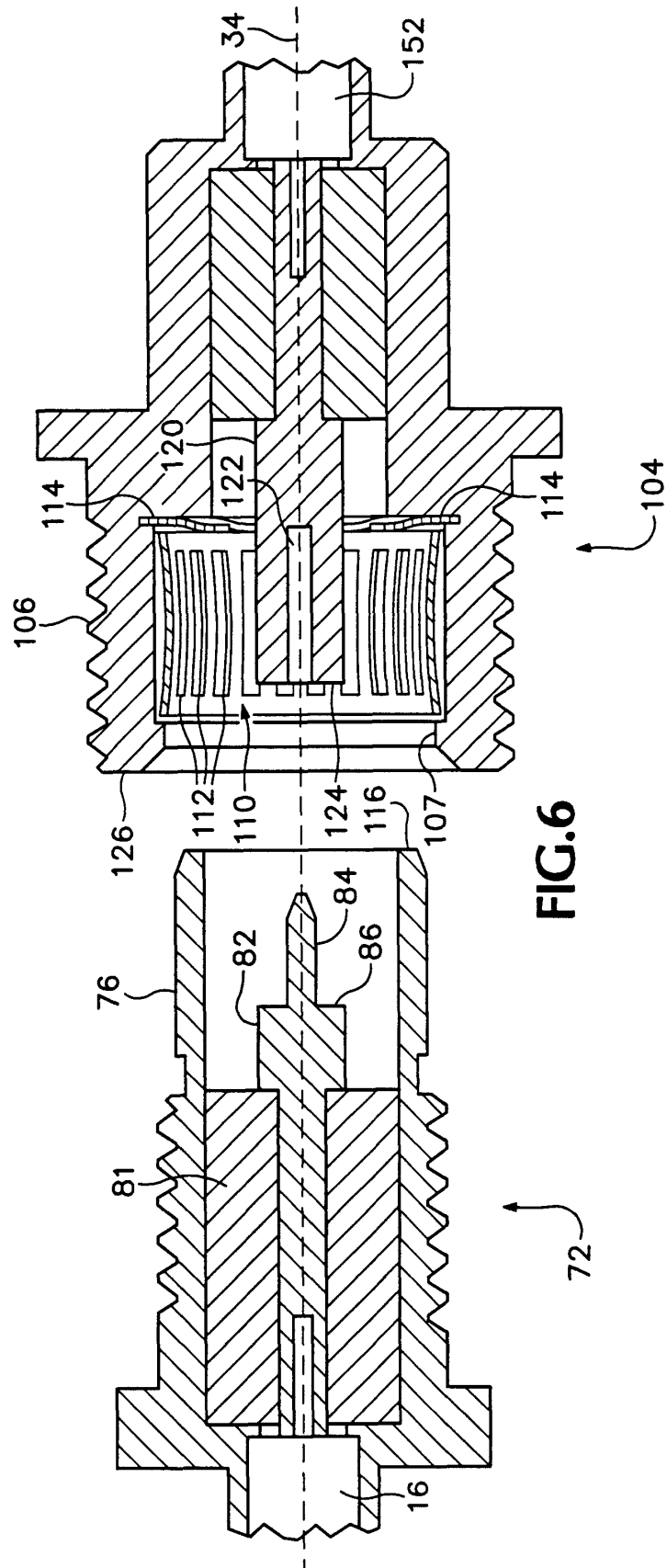
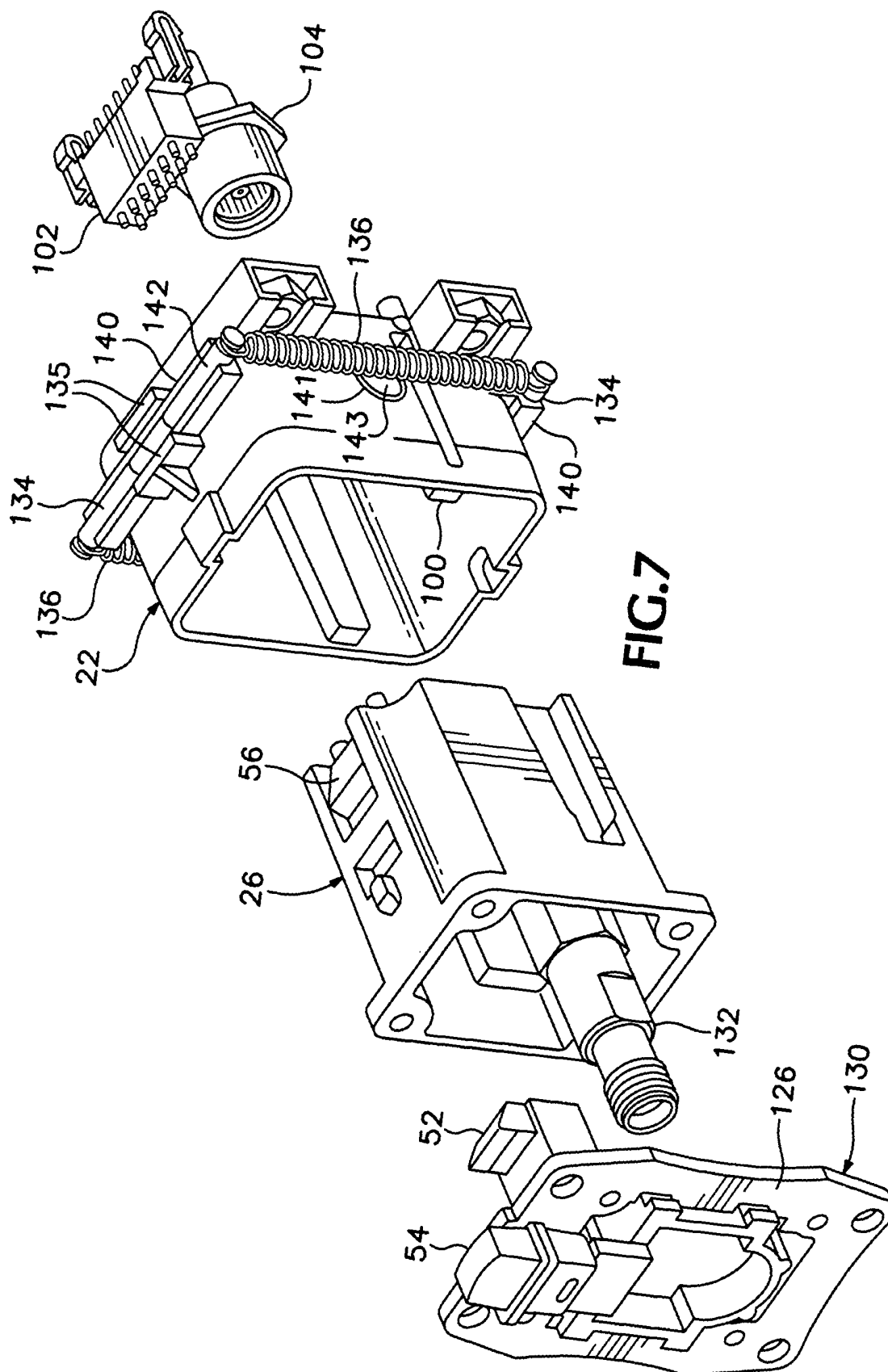
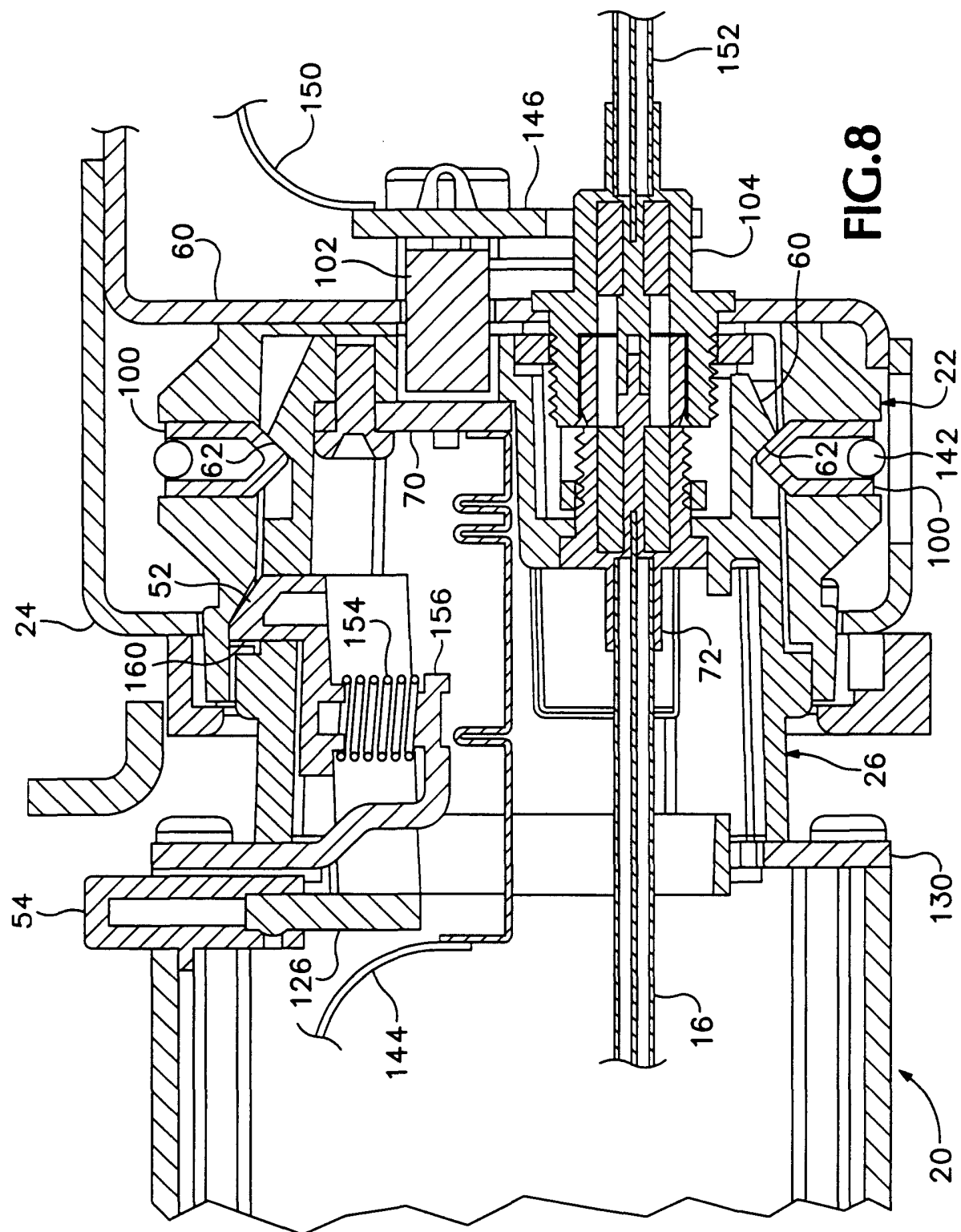


FIG. 6





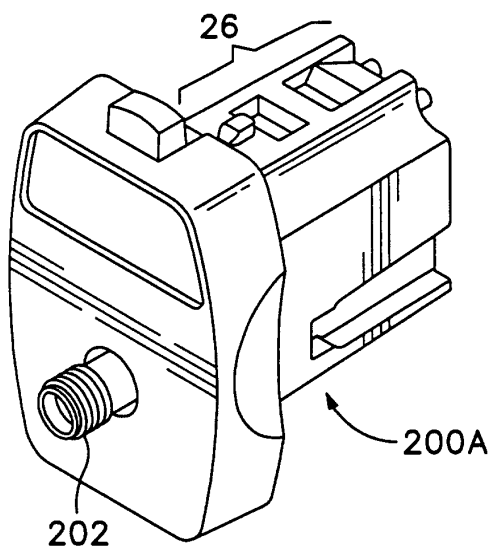


FIG. 9A

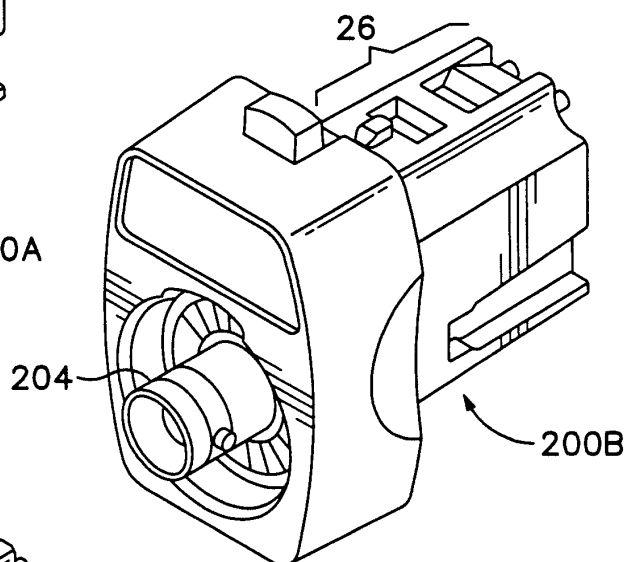


FIG. 9B

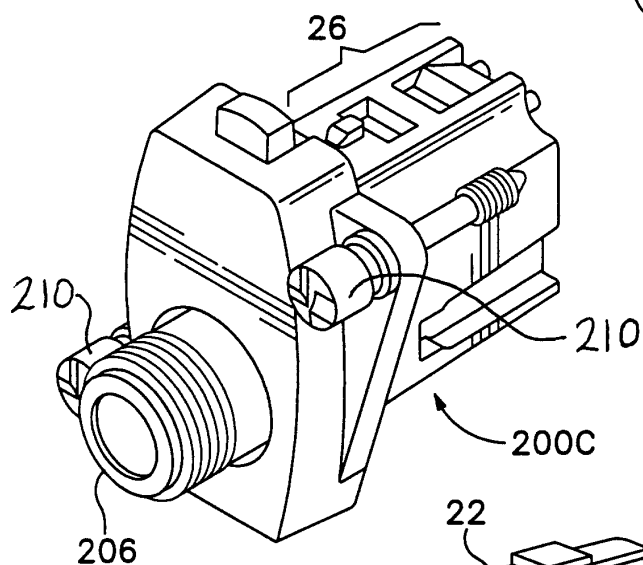


FIG. 9C

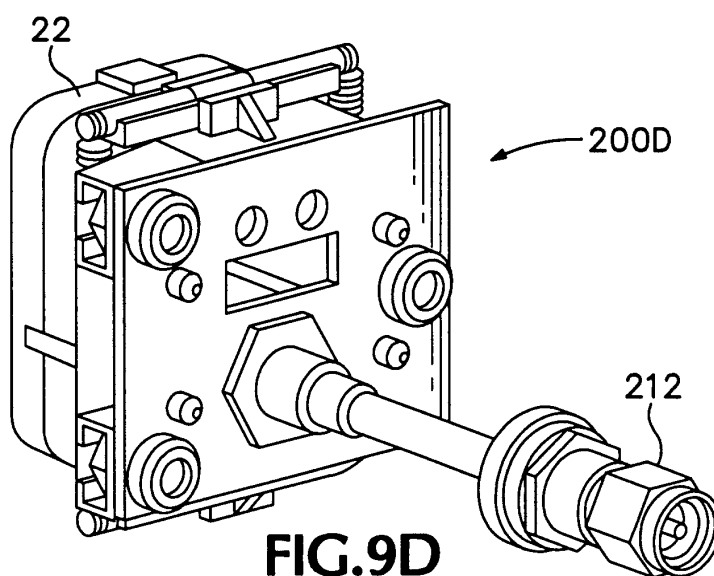


FIG. 9D